



City of Somerville

PLANNING BOARD

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

21 JANUARY 2021 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Michael Capuano	Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Amelia Aboff	Vice Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Sam Dinning	Clerk	<i>Present</i>	
Jahan Habib	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Rob Buchanan	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	

City Staff Present: Rebecca Lyn Cooper (Planning & Zoning), Daniel Bartman (Planning & Zoning), Victor Nascimento (Planning & Zoning), and Sarah Lewis (Planning & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm and adjourned at 8:13pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes Approval

The Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes from 7 January 2021.

OTHER BUSINESS: SomerVision 2040

Victor Nascimento presented updates to the document since the end of the planning process, describing the themes and intent for the process and highlighting key ideas and priorities. He described the outreach and engagement steps, and the efforts undertaken to broaden the outreach to the widest possible network of community members, and discussed new content produced in response to the challenges and concerns raised by the community and particular to the context of 2020.

Chair Capuano spoke appreciatively of the additional focus on the 'grow older' focus of the process and document, noting that it was important for the City to be a place that people can remain in as they grow older.

Vice Chair Aboff reiterated that the process was thorough, with diligent outreach to the community, and encouraged the Board to move to adoption soon.

Member Buchanan asked if there was another round of public comment on the draft and asked about the next steps. Mr. Nascimento noted that this would be the final draft that they would seek to move forward with.

Director Sarah Lewis noted that the next steps would be to seek endorsement of the City Council, and that it might be two weeks for that to happen.

Chair Capuano noted that it was the Planning Board's role to adopt, endorsement by Council was not required under state law, but as courtesy.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Clerk Dinning, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to take up the discussion again on February 18, 2021.

RESULT:

CONTINUED TO 2/18/2020

OTHER BUSINESS: Designation of the Planning Board representative to the Community Preservation Committee

(continued from 7 January 2021)

Chair Capuano discussed the role in general terms, reiterating discussion from previous meetings, and noted that the determination had to be made this evening.

Member Habib indicated interest, but was concerned about the time commitment. Chair Capuano discussed the meeting needs as being attendance once a month, with a bit more when it comes closer to time to award grants.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Clerk Dinning, the Board voted unanimously (4-0), with Member Habib abstaining, to nominate Jahan Habib for the Community Preservation Committee.

RESULT:

APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARING: 101-153 South Street

(continued from 7 January 2021)

Member Aboff recused herself and left the meeting at 6:25pm.

Chair Capuano recapped the discussion on the project to date.

John Fenton, Patrick Dunford, Matthew Snell, Kevin Griffin, and Rob Dickey (applicant team) were all present. Mr. Fenton recounted the process since the last meeting, documents requested by the Board, and the mobility questions addressed by the Board and Staff. He discussed the commitments and features identified in the Development Covenant and Union Square Neighborhood Council agreement.

Chair Capuano opened the discussion to the Board.

Clerk Dinning thanked the applicant team, especially for work with the community. He noted that he hoped this example can be a model for other projects moving forward.

Chair Capuano invited Senior Planner Daniel Bartman to discuss the amended conditions.

Mr. Bartman presented concerns raised by members of the Board, as well as the Inspectional Services Department in reviewing conditions language for clarity. Mr. Bartman noted that he had met with Mobility Division representatives to clarify the City's conceptual design intent. Mr. Bartman listed the language clarifications.

Chair Capuano noted improvements in the clarity of the document. He noted that only the Board would discuss the proposal and would not be reopening public testimony. He specifically called out the Development Team and the Staff for all the hard work on this Master Plan.

Chair Capuano opened the discussion to the Board.

Member Buchanan questioned what the vote would be on specifically.

Chair Capuano explained that they would need to make seven specific findings with condition language.

Mr. Bartman confirmed.

Member Buchanan requested that the community center space be moved from Phase III to Phase IV, which would allow it to be included in a residential building, adjacent to a civic space, instead of a lab building.

Chair Capuano noted that he did not want to de-rail years of work by requesting to move something from one phase to another. He understood that a lot of work and community involvement had gone into the decision making process and he did not want to come in at the last minute and change things right before the Board was ready to vote.

Mr. Bartman noted that he did not believe that the request would adversely affect the project.

Chair Capuano recognized the applicant team to address the Board's concerns.

Mr. Fenton confirmed that the community agreed that the community center space would be a better fit in a residential building. Mr. Snell confirmed that the language was supposed to be changed from "completed by Phase III" to "identified by Phase III". Mr. Bartman explained that the language in the "Phasing" section had been updated.

Member Dinning asked if moving from a lab building to a residential building would reduce the square footage for the community center space.

Mr. Bartman stated that moving the community center space would not reduce the size.

Mr. Fenton did not have an objection to the request to move the community center space. Mr. Snell asked if the arts and creative enterprise space would remain in the currently proposed buildings.

Staff confirmed.

Member Buchanan asked about the inclusion of a North/South pedestrian bridge over the MBTA line.

Chair Capuano noted that the condition language leaves the option for a pedestrian bridge open, but does not require it.

Mr. Fenton confirmed that the language is fine with the applicant team.

Member Buchanan requested adding condition language requiring Building 2 and 3A to have podium façades, so that they fit better within the neighborhood.

Mr. Fenton noted that he did not expect to be designing buildings at this meeting, and that the proposed changes had come up without advance notice.

Chair Capuano explained that if these changes have not come up with the applicant team prior to tonight, then they should have ample time to review the language before the Board takes a vote.

Mr. Bartman confirmed that, as communications between a Board member and an applicant are not permitted outside of a public meeting, the applicant team had not heard concerns regarding the facades until this meeting when they were communicated by Mr. Buchanan.

Chair Capuano thanked Staff for the explanation of protocol and indicated that he wanted to make sure that the applicant understood the conditions before the Board voted on them.

Mr. Bartman and the applicant team discussed the condition language regarding the community center and arts and creative enterprise space.

The applicant team asked about the building façade condition.

Mr. Bartman and the Board discussed whether the condition was necessary at this stage, as it dealt with matters typically reserved for Building Site Plan Approval.

Chair Capuano coordinated with Mr. Buchanan to confirm that the intent behind the building façade condition was to integrate the buildings into the neighborhood respectfully. Chair Capuano suggested that the condition language be broadened, as it was currently too directive and specific for this step in the process.

Mr. Bartman offered possible language suggestions.

Mr. Fenton stated that the applicant team had done a lot of work with the community and the team's intent was to build something that is welcome within the neighborhood.

The Board and the applicant team discussed the condition language regarding the community center and arts and creative enterprise space once again. The applicant team wanted to make sure that the arts and creative enterprise space could be included in all four phases. The Board was in support of amending the language.

Mr. Bartman read all revised conditions for the applicant and the Board.

Mr. Dickey requested that the Building 2 condition be changed from a four-six story podium to a two-four story podium, to keep with the building design they already had in the works.

Mr. Bartman made the language change to the condition.

Chair Capuano made a motion to note the Board's finding that the Comprehensive Plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City were served by the proposal. Clerk Dinning seconded

the motion and the Board voted unanimously (4-0) in favor, with Vice Chair Aboff recused from discussion and vote.

Chair Capuano made a motion to note the Board's finding that the intent of the zoning district where the property is located was supported by the proposal. Clerk Dinning seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously (4-0) in favor, with Vice Chair Aboff recused from discussion and vote.

Chair Capuano made a motion to note the Board's finding that the proposed alignment and connectivity of the thoroughfare network is appropriate. Clerk Dinning seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously (4-0) in favor, with Vice Chair Aboff recused from discussion and vote.

Chair Capuano made a motion to note the Board's finding that the gross floor area allocated to different use categories is appropriate. Clerk Dinning seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously (4-0) in favor, with Vice Chair Aboff recused from discussion and vote.

Chair Capuano made a motion to note the Board's finding that mitigation proposed to alleviate any adverse impacts on utility infrastructure has been made and meets statutory requirements. Clerk Dinning seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously (4-0) in favor, with Vice Chair Aboff recused from discussion and vote.

Chair Capuano made a motion to note the Board's finding that the proposed development phasing was appropriate and meets statutory requirements. Clerk Dinning seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously (4-0) in favor, with Vice Chair Aboff recused from discussion and vote.

Chair Capuano made a motion to note the Board's finding that the proposed on-street parking to address demand by customers of Retail Sales, Food & Beverage, or Commercial Services principal uses was appropriate and meets minimum statutory requirements. Clerk Dinning seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously (4-0) in favor, with Vice Chair Aboff recused from discussion and vote.

After due deliberation and having made all their required findings, Chair Capuano made a motion to approve the Master Plan Special Permit application. Clerk Dinning seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously (4-0) in favor, with Vice Chair Aboff recused from discussion and vote.

RESULT:	APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS
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NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. To review a full recording, please contact the Planning & Zoning Division at planning@somervillema.gov.